

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



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Date Issued: 7/30/2012

#### **2012 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release #80**

#### **Summer Update #8, Districts 1-6**

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

#### **Assessment Projects**

##### Andreafsky River weir/USFWS

The cumulative passage through July 29 is approximately 2,400 Chinook which is below the average of 4,000 for this date. The cumulative passage for summer chum is approximately 56,500 which is below the median of 57,200 for this date.

##### Pilot Station sonar project/ADFG

Chinook salmon passage at Pilot Station sonar is estimated to be approximately 107,000 through July 29, which is below the historical average of 148,000 for this date. It is also below the average of 133,000 for historical late years for this date. Summer chum salmon passage is estimated to be approximately 2.1 million which is above the historical median of 1.4 million.

##### Anvik River sonar project/ADFG

The Anvik River sonar project completed operations on July 26. The summer chum salmon passage is estimated to be approximately 484,000 which is above the historical median of 473,000 for this date.

##### Gisasa River weir/USFWS

The cumulative passage through July 29 is approximately 1,300 Chinook which is below the average of 2,300 for this date. The cumulative passage for summer chum is approximately 83,000 which is well above the historical median of 37,000 for this date.

#### Henshaw Creek Weir/TCC

The cumulative passage through July 28 is approximately 860 Chinook which is below the average of 980 for this date. The cumulative passage for summer chum is approximately 248,000 which is well above the median of 73,000 for this date.

#### Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/Zuray

The cumulative expanded count through July 29 is approximately 3,400 Chinook which is above the average of 2,200 for this date. The cumulative expanded count for summer chum is approximately 2,000 which is above the median of 600 for this date.

#### Eagle Sonar/ADFG

The cumulative Chinook salmon passage at Eagle sonar is estimated to be approximately 18,100 through July 29, which is below the average of 40,400 for this date.

#### Chena River Tower/ADFG

The cumulative count for Chinook salmon through July 29 is 1,400 which is below the average of 6,500 for this date. The cumulative count for summer chum salmon is 2,000 which is below the median of 3,100 for this date.

#### Salcha River Tower/BSFA

The cumulative count for Chinook salmon through July 29 is 6,000 which is below the average of 11,200 for this date. The cumulative count for summer chum salmon is 4,300 summer which is below the median of 9,100 for this date.

#### Chinook and Summer Chum Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.5-inch LYTF set nets through July 9 (Big Eddy) and July 15 (Middle Mouth) was 2% age-4, 30% age-5, 66% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. Females comprised 63% of fish sampled. The sample size was 807 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.25-inch Big Eddy drift test fishery through July 13 was 1% age-4, 33% age-5, 64% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. Females comprised 61% of fish sampled. The sample size was 219 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 7.5-inch Mountain Village drift test fishery through July 11 was 2% age-4, 45% age-5, 49% age-6, and 4% age-7 fish. Females comprised 44% of fish sampled. The sample size was 405 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the subsistence harvest collected by fishermen contracted by the Association of Village Council Presidents through July 12 in Districts 1 and 2 was 5% age-4, 56% age-5, 38% age-6, and 1% age-7 fish. Females comprised 26% of fish sampled. The sample size was 526 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the incidental commercial harvest through July 13 (Period 10) in District 1 was 19% age-4, 50% age-5, 30% age-6, and 1% age-7 fish. Females comprised 30% of fish sampled. The sample size was 629 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the incidental commercial harvest through July 11 (Period 3) in District 2 was 33% age-4, 45% age-5, and 22% age-6 fish. Females comprised 44% of fish sampled. The sample size was 9 fish.

The chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch Dall Point drift test fishery through July 9 was 62% age-4, 32% age-5, and 6% age-6 fish. Females comprised 38% of fish sampled. The sample size was 431 fish.

The chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch LYTF drift nets through July 15 (Big Eddy) and July 15 (Middle Mouth) was 69% age-4, 26% age-5, and 5% age-6 fish. Females comprised 57% of fish sampled. The sample size was 1,576 fish.

The chum salmon age composition from the commercial harvest through July 13 (Period 10) in District 1 was 71% age-4, 24% age-5, and 5% age-6 fish. Females comprised 49% of fish sampled. The sample size was 787 fish.

## **Assessment**

Based on the assessment information to date, the Chinook salmon run is poor. The Pilot Station sonar cumulative passage estimate of approximately 107,000 Chinook salmon through July 29 is well below the historical average of 148,000 for this date, and is also below the average passage estimates at this point for late run years, of approximately 133,000. Current data suggest the 2012 first quarter at Pilot Station sonar was approximately June 24 (5 days late). The median was approximately June 28 (4 days late) and the third quarter was approximately July 2 (3 days). These dates are preliminary until the Chinook salmon run is completed. Based on historical late year run timing and current data, the 2012 Chinook salmon run size is coming in at the lower end of the preseason outlook estimate of 109,000, or potentially lower.

Currently, several escapement monitoring projects for Chinook salmon (Andreafsky River weir, Gisasa River weir, Henshaw Creek weir, Chena River tower, Salcha River tower) have estimated passages well below the historical average passage estimates for this date. Despite these low passage estimates, the escapement goal of 2,100 – 4,900 has been achieved at E.F. Andreafsky River with a total estimated passage of 2,433 Chinook salmon through July 29. The escapement goal of 3,300 – 6,500 for Salcha River has also been achieved with a total estimated passage of 5,970 Chinook salmon through July 29. It is still early for the escapement projects because of the late run timing, but due to the poor run size, escapements may be lower than historical averages in some or most escapement streams.

The Eagle sonar cumulative passage estimate of approximately 18,100 Chinook salmon through July 29 is well below the historical average of 40,400 for this date. Comparing historical run timing at Eagle sonar and the 2012 run timing at Pilot Station sonar and Rapids Test Fish Wheel, the quarter point at Eagle sonar was approximately July 24<sup>th</sup> through July 25<sup>th</sup>. These dates are preliminary until the project is completed. Based on this estimated run timing, the preliminary projection at Eagle sonar for Chinook salmon passage is approximately 34,400 to 42,400, which is below the Interim Management Escapement Goal of 42,500 to 55,000 adopted by the joint US-Canada Yukon River Panel.

Summer chum salmon passage through July 18 at Pilot Station sonar when the project finished was estimated to be approximately 2.13 million, which is above the historical median of 1.36 million for that date. The first 2012 first quarter at Pilot Station sonar for summer chum salmon was June 24. The median was approximately June 29 and the third quarter was approximately July 5. The escapement goal of >40,000 summer chum salmon has been achieved at E.F. Andreafsky River with approximately 56,500 summer chum salmon passage through July 29. The Anvik River escapement goal of 350,000 – 700,000 summer chum salmon has also been achieved with 483,500 estimated passage through July 22. Preliminary estimates suggest the 2012 summer chum run was at the upper end of the preseason outlook estimate of 1.5-2.0 million.

## **Current Management**

Conservation measures have been discontinued in Districts 1-4, Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B and 5-C and District 6. Based on run timing, restrictive measures are being continued in the middle and upper portions of Subdistricts 5-D in order to conserve Chinook salmon for escapement. Subsistence salmon fishing time is being reduced in the middle and upper portions of Subdistrict 5-D, in an effort to protect Chinook salmon that are passing through these areas.

The current subsistence fishing schedules are as follows:

Coastal District: The Coastal District is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller

Districts 1, 2, 3: Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after each commercial fishing period. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller during open subsistence salmon fishing periods.

The Innoko River: Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Subdistrict 4-A (from ¾ miles downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Cone Point): This area includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk. Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A is subsistence salmon fishing is open 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays to 6:00 p.m. Sundays.

Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek): This area includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby. Subsistence salmon fishing is open 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Sundays to 6:00 p.m. Fridays.

In District 4, fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller during open subsistence salmon fishing periods.

Koyukuk River: Subsistence salmon fishing in the Koyukuk River is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B and 5-C: Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 31, Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will be open for 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Sundays.

In an effort to protect Chinook salmon as they pass through this long section of river, Subdistrict 5-D has been divided into three separate areas.

Subdistricts 5-D-Lower (from an ADF&G regulatory marker 2 miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the Hadweenzic River and including all adjacent tributaries): This area includes the communities of Stevens Village and Beaver. Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Effective 7:00 p.m. Monday, July 30, subsistence salmon fishing will return the standard fishing schedule of open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day.

Subdistricts 5-D-Middle (from the Hadweenzic River to the upstream mouth of 22 Mile Slough and including all adjacent tributaries): This area includes the community of Fort Yukon. Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed and will remain closed until further notice.

Subdistrict 5-D-Upper (from 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries): This area includes the communities of Circle, and Eagle. Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed and will remain closed until further notice.

The department will notify fishermen by August 3 concerning the subsistence salmon fishing schedule for each portion of Subdistrict 5-D.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the downstream mouth of Wood River): This area includes the communities of Manley, Minto, and Nenana. Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B is open from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays, and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays.

The Old Minto Area: Subsistence fishing in the Old Minto Area is open from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays.

Subdistricts 6-C (from the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the downstream mouth of the Salcha River): This area includes the communities of Fairbanks, North Pole, and Salcha. Effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 30, personal use salmon fishing in Subdistrict 6-C will return to the standard schedule of two 42-hour periods each week. Personal use salmon fishing periods will be from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays, and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches and a length greater than 60 feet must be removed from the water.

## **Commercial Fishing**

The summer season commercial fishery is over in Districts 1 and 2. Ten commercial fishing periods occurred in District 1 and six commercial fishing periods occurred in District 2. The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest for Districts 1 and 2 combined is approximately 206,000 summer chum salmon, and 2,400 Chinook salmon have been reported as caught but not sold.

### Preliminary harvest information for Subdistrict 4-A

Thirteen commercial fishing periods have been announced through July 30. Commercial fishing gear is restricted to fish wheels only which must be manned at all times of operation. All Chinook salmon caught in the fish wheels must be immediately returned to the water alive.

Currently, Subdistrict 4-A is open for a 72-hour fishing period which is scheduled to close at 8:00 p.m. Monday, July 30. This will be the final commercial fishing period for the summer chum salmon season in Subdistrict 4-A.

The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest for Subdistrict 4-A through July 30 is approximately 107,100 summer chum salmon. A total of 59 Chinook salmon have been caught and released in the fishery to date.

### Preliminary harvest information for District 6

An emergency regulation adopted by the Board of Fisheries (BOF) on July 17 allows the department to open summer chum salmon directed commercial fishing periods in District 6 during time of Chinook salmon conservation with fish wheels only. Fish wheels must be manned at all times during operations, and all Chinook salmon caught in the fish wheels must immediately be released to the water alive. This regulatory change implemented by the BOF is effective for the 2012 fishing season.

Two 42-hour and one 168-hour commercial fishing periods have been announced to date. The cumulative preliminary harvest in District 6 through July 29 is approximately 860 summer chum salmon.

Period #3: 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 25, until 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 1

Fishermen will be notified by August 1 regarding additional commercial fishing periods.

Recorded fishery announcements and updates will be available 24 hours a day at 949-1731 or 1-866-479-7387. If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the Fairbanks ADF&G office at (907) 459-7274.

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